

Functional business education: antidote for social vices and insecurity in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Nigeria, a nation that is blessed and endowed by oil, is presently engulfed in series of contemporary challenges ranging from unemployment, civil unrest to insecurity of lives and properties with their attendant implication of unprecedented rise in social vices that have heated up the polity, thereby tarnishing the international image of the nation. It is on this premise that this paper focus on the need for checkmating and overcoming the rising spate of current challenges and heinous acts through Functional Business Education – a subject of living. It essentially x-rays the concept and roles of Functional Vocational Education in addressing the contemporary challenges of social vices in Nigeria, constraints and necessary antidotes to effective functionality of Business Education in the nation.

Keywords: Functional Business Education, Social Vices, Insecurity

1. INTRODUCTION

For any nation to achieve relative greatness and become one of the best among the committee of nations, its key sector of education must be seriously organized, designed, developed and made functional. Nigeria, a mono-economic country with about 250 multicultural ethnic nationalities and one of the biggest nations in the globe with a land area of about 923,968 square kilometers and population estimate of about 170,123,740 people (CIA, 2012) is presently faced with key challenges which requires urgent attentions for it to continue to exist as a cooperative entity, that will become one of the greatest countries in the world. Successive Government in Nigeria it has made attempt to diagnosed socio-politic and economic problems of the country, characterized by indiscipline, horrendous corruption and unabated fraudulent practices which have been threatening our nationhood since independence.

The discovery of oil in the early 60s and the manifestation of long depression in which the economy is trapped since 1982, have evolved series of reconstructive measures and policies. Part of these measures is redefining and harmonizing the educational philosophy in line with the national objectives which has to be geared towards self-realisation, better human relationship, individuals and national efficiency, effective citizenship, national consciousness and unity as well as social, cultural, economic, political, scientific and technological growth (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1985).

The right antidote for the present hullabaloo in Nigeria is true and functional Vocational Education of which Business Education is a key component. To enhance its functionality in the present contemporary globe where technology is fast dictating the pace of development, Business Education which serves as the bedrock of any government economic growth, therefore requires utmost focus from all participants through adequate planning, funding and effective implementation.

2. THE CONCEPT OF FUNCTIONAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

Functional education is the instruction that is given to an individual to develop life skills not typically addressed in the general education curriculum. According to Zeiberger (1961), functional education refers to the education that comes from the child's needs, and that causes the child's interest as a mechanism for activating him towards his desirable activities. Its purpose is to develop the frame of mind that acts from the wholeness of organic life, with relation to practical life in the present and in the future. Zeiberger (1961) went further to put-up the following as some of the psychological backgrounds of functional education.

- Functional education is based on the natural need of the child to enquire and to know, to observe and to work, and especially to play. It serves to arouse in the child spiritual longing like the love of the food and of work, that will not come by force, but rather in a free atmosphere and in suitable living conditions.
- The education will develop the intellectual and moral abilities of the child rather than force-feeding him many facts that are quickly forgotten, or are accumulated in the memory like a foreign substance, without any connection to his life.
- The teacher should stimulate moral and spiritual needs cooperate with his students, rather than lecture them; he will aid them in acquiring knowledge through self-study and personal experiences. In this case, his main quality should be enthusiasm rather than scholarship. Functional education opposes the traditional formal training that claims to develop academics skills by drilling without due regards to the student's interest, and that believes that most of the training should be in efforts that develop the brain.
- From these definitions and psychological background of functional education, these principles can be applied to Vocational Business Education, thus developing the necessary spiritual longing, the love for the work and interest that will drive the urge in them at all times.

In early 60s in Nigeria, foreign students from the Commonwealth countries sought admissions into Nigeria's citadels of learning. At that time, Nigeria's education system was confident to parade the best crop of students that could stand their own feet anywhere. Graduates that were turned-out then were leaders and shakers, not only in Nigerian society but in the whole of Africa and the World at large. All these were possible because of properly formulated and clinically implemented educational policy. Although successive governments, including the military have always given the impression that education remains the framework on which the country's development revolves, its implementation in the past decades has been fatally flawed and ever remained a bookish venture.

Going by this trend, the nation will not be able to tackle unemployment if functional business education is not put in place (Adejoke & Aregheefe, 2020). Wise decisions on production, distribution and consumption patterns of meager resources at the nation and individual's disposal will not be appropriately harnessed; the administrations of scarce human, material and physical (including financial) resources will be in total shamble; corruption and other fraudulent practices will continue growing unabated and less value would be placed on human life and properties, all to the detriment of the nation's growth and development. Business education as the bedrock for nation's growth requires utmost focus through government policies adequate planning and effective implementation to enhance its vocational and functionality.

3. VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

Vocational Education is that segment of education charged with preparing an individual for a particular occupation, business, profession or trade. That is, any form of education, training or re-training designed to prepare persons to enter or continue in paid or unpaid employment in any organized occupation (Okafor, 1991). It is that important functional education encompassing Business Education, Agricultural Education, Home Economics and Vocational Guidance and Counseling, et cetera. Basically, vocational education is a consequence of government and the societal growing impetus and renewed clamor for functional education that will enhance self-reliance, economic emancipation and technological take off of the country through an improved manpower development.

Vocational acquaints students with job-specific and employable skills, the experience which helps them from a base knowledge about function and operations of business environment (Asmore, 1990). Vocational education will according to Ifayefunmi (1990), afford the recipient the opportunity to develop those skills, abilities, understanding and competency that will enable him not only

to competently handle his personal affairs but also to become more aware of all vocational opportunities a man could gainfully engage in. Besides, the acquired skills, knowledge, understanding and abilities will provide the student with the much needed intelligence and competencies that will enable them fit into and find job satisfaction in the labor force of a complex and dynamic modern economy (Ifayefunmi, 1990).

4. CONCEPTUAL DEFINITION OF BUSINESS EDUCATION

The multi-dimensional role, coverage, the diverse orientation of eminent business scholars and the spate of development of Business Education have greatly influenced the definitions given to it by different people who have greatly perceived it from different perspectives. This observation is also corroborated by Nolan et al (1967) who pointed out that Business Education means different things to many people. While some people would refer to it as those commercial subjects taught at the secondary schools level- Business studies, Commerce, Typewriter, Shorthand, Book-keeping of Accounts and Office-practice, others would see it as those types of education given at any educational level for successful entrance into the business world. To some others, it is an education given at tertiary institutions including such course as Accounting, Marketing, Secretarial or Office Education, Communication, Business and Company Laws and Finance, etc.

Yet to some, Business Education is that aspect of general education designed to prepare teachers for commercial and Business subjects. Eni (1987) who quoted Policies Commission for Business and Economic Education as saying:

Business Education represents a broad and diverse discipline that is included in all types of Educational delivery system, elementary, secondary and post-secondary
..... Business education includes education for office occupations, distribution and marketing occupation, business teaching, business administration and economic understanding.

Whatever and whichever angle one may view it, either as education for or about business, Business education is that aspect of technical/vocational education which offers individuals the knowledge, abilities, skills and understanding that will enable him function properly either as a producer/seller or consumer/buyer of goods and service within the dynamic business world. It is a type of education which emphasizes knowledge, skills and attitude that fit a person either wholly or in part for a definite business vocation. Hence, it is a utilitarian aspect of vocational education which embraces specialized training, instruction and preparation for secretarial, office management, stenographic, Book-keeping and Accounting, Clerical and Distributive education that prepares young and old to function intelligently as producers, consumers and citizens within business economy. It is a programme designed to develop special competencies in marketable business skills and techniques (Robert, 1971), Nasaasy et al (1977), cited by David and Oladunjoye (1987), have also described this subject as that aspect of the total educational programme that provides the knowledge, skill, understanding and attitudes needed to perform in the business world as a producer and or consumer of goods and services that business offers.

In his own, while distinguishing Business Education from other related disciplines as Commerce and Business Administration, which only form parts of its components, Sapre (1974) noted that Business Education is comparatively a new development in educational delivery system in most developing nations of Africa, Asia and Latin America. The relative newness of this subject of survivals is evident by recent increased awareness and renewed impetus for its inclusion in the Nigeria educational programme at all levels (Eni 1987), in order to meet the emerging needs of youths in knowledge, attitudes and skills required for effective economic understanding and communication (Aina, 1990).

5. IMPORTANCE OF BUSINESS EDUCATION TO A NATION

The emergence and renewed call for the inclusion of Business Education in the educational curriculum of Nigeria school is quite unconnected with its indispensable role in fostering economic growth and technological advancement of a nation.

If Nigeria is to achieve its lofty goals in industrialization and technological take-off, Business Education is necessary for those to work in the industry and those to consume the industrial products and also enhance mass production. Also, in the Ministries, Business education is necessary for managerial and administrative posts: clerical and secretarial activities are exclusively business occupation.

Besides, the services of schools leavers with Business Education knowledge to work as account clerks, salesmen, store-keepers, typists, secretaries, et cetera, for the growth, success and viability of their enterprises would be needed by the employers of labor.

The management and the related activities of Marketing, Finance and personnel (all which are aspects of Business Education) are responsible for efficient production of goods and services in this country. Business Education, as the major supplier of vocational and consumer education will play a vital role in greater promotion of employment in Nigeria's economic revival.

Aina (1990), in support of some social scientists who have attributed the Nigeria economic backwardness and slum to lack of skilled manpower, technology and business ethnics, describes Business Education as that aspect of general education for all youth in knowledge, attitudes and skill needed to be effective in economic understanding and communication. Thus, the content of instruction in Business Education such as Accounting, Marketing, Economics, Secretarial and Office Management and Administration, Computer Education, etc, will afford the recipient of such knowledge the greatest opportunity of grappling with the ever increasing complexities in the business world and also for the intelligent exploitation of our scarce resources

This presuppose that Nigerians are no doubt becoming aware of the fact that in an economy like ours, workers will be more productive, if they are well informed and adequately equipped with necessary skills and competences. Hence, the present government increased attention and public awareness towards a growing impetus for technical/vocational education. The functionality of any educational programme is in its ability to foster continuous development of relevant skills, knowledge and habits whose broad understanding and application will enable recipients grow and contribute meaningfully towards the country's economic emancipation and technological advancement.

The adverse perspective at which people may view Business Education notwithstanding, its indispensable dominant role in manpower development remains lucid. Business Education efficiently and effectively initiates, trains and develop the students to acquire the necessary skills, facts, knowledge, habits and attitudes that will match the current nation's astronomical population growth with varying needs and consumption patterns and the seemingly complex industrial and technological development coupled with dwindling oil revenue (the main stay of Nigeria economy).

There is no gain saying the fact therefore, that vocational Business Education over prepares its graduates for immediate skillful employment in the world of works. Like any other vocational education, students are trained for specific types of jobs in the ever expanding business world; thereby affording them the rare opportunity of entering into any desired business profession without sweat. The employable skills, knowledge, values and attitudes acquired will adequately equip them with the much desired abilities, understanding and competencies to be efficient and effective in any chosen field of business occupations

As a career education it provide educational opportunities for students preparing for careers in field other than business to acquire the managerial skills (general, specialized and conceptual) and knowledge required for efficient and effective performance. In Nigeria, like in any other part of the world, institutions are currently running series of diploma, certificate, degree and post graduate degree programmes in Management Sciences – Business Administration/Management, Accounting, Banking and Finance, Marketing and Office Education, etc, whereby different cadres of managers are being trained and developed thereby availing them the much needed skills and expertise in their respective administrative and managerial roles (Gbemiga et al. 2020).

Besides, it provide educational programme directed towards developing skills and attitude conducive to self-employment as students willing to pursue career in business are offered opportunities to developed those inherent skills, abilities understanding that will enable them entre, perform and thrive in field of business occupation on graduation from schools and colleges. The experience gained during the Students Industrial Work Experiences (SIWES) will fuel their inherent capabilities to successfully handle their private businesses or to be successful in any managerial functions bestowed on them in both private and public enterprises. Furthermore, the entrepreneurial or small scale business instructions received in schools will put them at the best advantage in becoming employers of labor rather than job seekers. This will, no doubt, reduce the spate of drop-outs from schools and crime rate. Business Education over prepares students for entry into and advancement in jobs within business, and equally important too it prepares students to handle their own business affairs and to function intelligently as consumers in a business economy (Ropham et al, 1975).

6. CHALLENGES OF VOCATIONAL BUSINESS EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

Some of the challenges of vocational Education include:

1. Inappropriate, irrelevant and out-dated curricula offerings in Vocational Business Education towards meeting the needs of employers, industry and society at large in the present jet-age of office automation, occasioned by convergence of information and communication technology. In many cases when the reviews are proposed, they usually do not take sufficient considerations for the modern trends and demands in the relevant areas and they usually becomes outdated before they are implemented due to the slow bureaucracy process.
2. Funding has always been the major constraint to the development of effective of Vocational Business Education in Nigeria as commitments have not been matched with actions in acquiring the right environment.

3. Poor state of infrastructural and training equipment resulting in most of the trainees stuffed with theoretical knowledge at the expense of practical skill training which is the hall-mark of effective Vocational Business Education.
4. Placement of Students Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) is fast degenerating into a mere formality.
5. Insufficient number of quality, current and relevant instructional materials and modern-day equipment for efficient instruction of Business Education courses in Nigerian schools.
6. Non-involvement of professional business educators and other important stakeholders in policy formulations on Business Education.
7. Non-existence of good laboratories and libraries for effective practical instructions and referencing for Business Education courses.
8. Poor condition of service and adequate motivation for business educators, compared to those of their colleagues in other professions and sectors.
9. Lack of knowledge of ICT by Business Educators and students.

7. CONCLUSION

From the foregoing, one can rightly conclude that for a nation to remain cooperate, sovereign and united entity, there is need for functionality of its educational system. Vocational Business Education of the Nigerian schools system is a potent tool to fight the menace of unemployment, social vices and insecurity of lives and properties. However, to effectively play its role in employment generation, wealth creation and poverty eradication in meeting the present challenges, Vocational Business Education has to be repositioned for the achievement of its objective of producing graduates who are not only skilled and employable but also can be self-employed, self-reliant and self-sufficient. The programme should be focused (human, material and infrastructure) at instilling entrepreneurial and saleable business skills in students and producing graduates who will be job creators and not job seekers.

Suggested Strategies for Addressing Contemporary Challenges of Social Vices and Insecurity in Nigeria through Functional Business Education

The following strategies, if applied will properly position functional Business Education to effectively play its important role in eradicating or reducing challenges of unemployment, social unrest and insecurity of lives and properties and alike:

1. **Embracement of Peaceful Co-existence:** The approaches to meeting challenges of social vices and insecurity of lives and properties are most promising and important, if all the stakeholders can embrace peace through building a reliable democratic process that will accommodate all political affiliations in the country cum diverse ethnic, religion and multicultural interests, transparency, fairness and openness.
2. **Employment, Training and Development of Business Educators:** Government and proprietors of education institutions in Nigeria should employ adequate number of professionally qualified business teachers to teach different business specialist areas in the nations' schools, colleges and universities. They should be made to advance in their professional competencies through training and re-training programmes in their specialised areas, either on part-time or full time, seminar, conferences or workshops.
3. **Curriculum Redevelopment, Review and Up-dating:** Business Education curriculum should be regularly reviewed in line with modern trends and provisions of National Teacher vocational and training needs and goals every five years, with much emphasis on practicals. A balanced approach should be emphasized in the school curriculum through the integration of technical, employability, and generalized skills in vocational programmes. In addition, vocational Business Education curricula should be flexible and responsive to the present and future needs of the nation.
4. **Appropriate Instructional Strategies Used in Vocational Business Education:** For teaching to provide the desired learning outcome, teaching style must match learning style. Teacher should use variety of instructional strategies and not focus on one method of teaching in order to meet the objectives of student's individual needs and strength. They should learn and apply modern style and techniques to teaching and keeping abreast with the development in instructional strategies, worldwide.
5. **Establishment of Vocational Business/Entrepreneurial Centers:** Entrepreneurial training centers should be established for the Vocational Business Education programmes in the various institutions that run them. These centers should be equipped with relevant and adequate modern-day facilities such that the creative potentials in learner could be brought out. These centers should be financed by the Federal Government and complemented by the State and Local Governments.
6. **Adequate Funding:** Vocational Business Education should be adequately funded as to enhance wealth creation, poverty reduction and invariably self-reliance. Dangana and Marjorie, (2009) citing Makoju, (2003), pointed out that finances is one of

the crucial factors that determines the range of equipments materials and services that can be provided. Hence, governments should adequately fund Vocational Business Education programmes in schools, colleges, training centers up to university level.

7. **Provision of Current and Sufficient Relevant Instructional Materials:** In order for Business Education to serve as a tool for poverty reduction, latest and sufficient number of machines and equipment should be provided for efficient instruction. Many institutions running Business Education programmes still operate with obsolete machines and equipment such that graduates are not relevant when they get to world of works (public services, industry and Business). It is important that students get familiar with the equipment they will use when they get to the world of business.
8. **Partnering with the Industry and Relevant Agencies:** Institutions and departments offering courses in Business Education should partner with the industries and the relevant agencies responsible for poverty reduction, job creation, and development of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMESE), wealth creation and economics. This partnership will assist in knowing the needs of the industry and working towards meeting them as well as keeping abreast with the policies and programmes of the agencies and utilizing them in training the students and even the teachers.
9. **Rehabilitation of Depleted Infrastructures:** Laboratories, workshops and libraries are in dire needs of repairs and not regularly maintained, while modern equipments are lacking and at times not functioning. If these facilities are improved, business vocational education will as well improve and the desired goals of producing the right business operators can be achieved.
10. **Improved Teaching and Working Conditions:** There is need to improve the business teachers working conditions so as to motivate them for more productivity and for a genuine change to be ensured.
11. **Improved ICT Capacity for Vocational Business Teachers:** Today's knowledge is based on the mastery of ICT. It is, therefore, necessary for institutions to improve the capacity of vocational business teachers and performance of students in this area.
12. **Appropriate Leadership:** Federal, State, and Local agencies should provide a clear vision and mission for vocational Business Education and training. In addition, the government should provide effective leadership and incentives for the private sector to encourage partnerships and collaboration with vocational business institutions.
13. **Stakeholders' Participation in Policy Formulation:** The government especially Ministry of Education, should seek input from numerous stakeholders, such as educators, business/industry, parent, students, academicians and other professionals, before formulating major policy decisions regarding vocational Business Education and training.
14. **Proper Orientation Programme for Students:** All candidates coming in to the vocational Business Education should be orientated adequacy, so that they will know the importance of the skills they want to acquire and as such develop interest in the programme.

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The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interests.

Data and materials availability

All data associated with this study are present in the paper.

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